



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

TWO SUMMERS WITH THE BLACKFEET INDIANS OF MONTANA

By ARTHUR NEVIN

AT seven o'clock in the evening, under a pouring rain, my train reached Browning Station, Montana. About three miles to the north could be seen the dozen or so shacks of Browning proper, where the Indian agency and trading posts are located. When the train left the station (which was but a small frame shed) and I hurriedly threw my luggage into the old-fashioned stage coach, and then jumped into this "prairie rocker," my enthusiasm lagged a bit, for the rain was falling heavily and a mist was beginning to settle which soon took from view the distant agency of Browning, leaving our coach floundering over the undulating prairie, deeper into the dusky mist which seemed to blot us out from all civilization.

Drenched by the time I reached the little hotel at the agency, I at once went to my room, unpacked my bag and found dry clothing. I had taken my dinner on the train, knowing it would be my last good meal for a long time to come. So I had little to do after arranging my blankets and few clothing effects for my life with the Indians, and at ten o'clock I was sleeping soundly on a corn-husk mattress.

The following morning a little time was taken over the dickering for a broncho, saddle and bridle. This accomplished, I was on my way to the Indian camp some thirty miles distant. The ride over the swells of the prairie, looking north and south as far as the eye could reach, with the snow-capped Rocky Mountains ever before me, was full of charm. The stillness of the great, open stretch of land thrilled me; the prairie grass waved about my broncho's feet with an abundance of many-colored little wild flowers peeping out here and there; a soft breeze blew white puff-like clouds over a marvelously blue sky in an atmosphere so rare that distance became a matter of confused speculation.

I must have been over a mile from the encampment when there came floating on this soft breeze over the prairie grass and flowers and beneath the beautiful, blue heavens, the first faint murmur of Indian drums. Stopping my pony, I listened for a moment; then overcome by impatience to be in the picture which my imagination was drawing, I urged my broncho into a hard gallop,

when suddenly the animal made an awkward lunge forward, falling upon his knees; he quickly recovered however, and with ears thrown forward, watched carefully the ground, for we were among gopher hills and to leap on the burrowings would mean a stumble or fall to a running horse.

I came to a stream, the Cut Bank River, which tosses down from the Rocky Mountains. Its rushing waters have cut its bed fifty feet or more below the level of the prairie, and along its banks, growing in plenty, are stately cottonwood trees and scented balsam poplars with a mat of intertwining willows at their feet.

There are but a few places where it is possible to ford this river, and the approaches to these few are usually rather precarious. The descent from the prairie to the water is at a degree verging upon the perpendicular, on the banks of crumbling, grayish clay and sand. The best way to reach the river is to give your broncho free rein and you will have a delightful slide, the pony on his haunches guiding with his fore feet, until he is close to the water's edge, when he makes a bound into the stream.

Ascending to the prairie (the pony jumping upwards at right angles), the Indian camp could be seen, half a mile up the river. It was but a short gallop, and soon my broncho began neighing to the enormous herd of Indian ponies grazing near the camp, some of whom were cordial enough to return the greeting.

Reaching a prominent knoll of the prairie, a marvelous view of the entire tented village burst upon me. There, before me, were a hundred and fifty wigwams—called *lodges* by the Indians—pitched in an oval shape, the inner line forming a perfect ellipse, while the outer lodges were scattered indiscriminately.

The white material from which these lodges are made is decorated by crude drawings, representing different animals, such as the deer, the snake, the buffalo and many others. These decorations, done in reds, blacks and yellows, each signify a society to which the owner of the lodge belongs. There are many societies, each created by some brave who has experienced a dream which came to him during a "long sleep" and through which the animal adorning his lodge became his talisman. These societies are of a religious character.

The village was gay with life. Indians bedecked with their gorgeously beaded buckskin costumes, their striking colored blankets carelessly thrown about them, were singing and dancing, the sun's rays constantly casting sharp, prismatic flashes from the glass beads, and one could think, feel and see nothing but color! color! color!

The Blackfeet are perhaps the most primitive of any tribe in the States. They hold to the customs and traditions of past generations. Climatic conditions favor the retaining of the painted face. The altitude, from forty-five hundred to five thousand feet, gives the winds passing over the snow mountains a piercing effect, and they attack the face unmercifully. To protect the skin from this element, the Indian uses a red paint, often smearing the entire face. The composition of this paint is very simple. At the base of the Rocky Mountains is found a pasty clay. This clay is red, blue, yellow and black, and by mixing it with bacon grease they have a primitive cold cream substitute.

The continuance of the pristine costume is accounted for by the fluctuating temperature. With the sun shining there is delightful warmth, but a cloud overshadowing will quickly chill the air. So the blanket is always kept in readiness. Clouds seem to be born on the ridge of the Rockies. Frequently up into a perfect blue sky will suddenly glide beautiful, large, white puffs which spread and amalgamate, float eastward, eclipse the sun and drive a poor relation of Jack Frost over the earth.

My first twenty-four hours in this camp were of indolence. When I entered their village I was not cognizant of being noticed in any way, so indifferent seemed these people and such was the lack of curiosity shown as to my presence among them. But their strategy was wonderfully clever, for I learned later that my every movement was watched.

And so I lolled about, in and out of my wigwam, speaking to no one and no one speaking to me, though many braves passed me, ignoring me with all the grace of indifference.

Primarily my visit to this reservation was to study and take notes of their music. To succeed in this I could not afford to take the aggressive for fear of committing some breach of etiquette, and thereby placing myself in bad repute with a people whose ways and customs were completely foreign to me.

During the solitary hours I heard, from distant wigwams, the Indians, singing. It filled me with enthusiasm and thrilled me with the possibilities I felt to be latent in their music. I listened with the greatest interest and tried to familiarize myself with the barbaric chants. I would become provoked when mentally notating a tune, to find the song taking an interval most puzzling. To probe the tremulous tones of a guttural and nasal vocalization was sufficient difficulty for me to master first and I paid considerable attention to this perplexity. From five o'clock in the afternoon on into the late night one can find ample opportunity to hear

the Indian music. They love to sing, and song to them is the most potent outlet of their emotions.

As evening came and darkness followed I looked upon a long stretch of wigwams, with grotesque shadows thrown by the fires within. Silhouettes of crouching Indians in a circle, some swaying to^o and fro with the pulsation of a song, until one, enticed by the singing, would rise and dance with nervous, savage, stilted steps, the body rigid with every movement; drums and rattles beating in syncopation that suggested adverse rhythm to that being sung. And lying flat upon the earth, my chin resting on my folded arms, I watched. My gaze would wander upwards over the wigwams into the great heavens, and never before did the stars look so large and so close to me. Then beyond—the vast stretch of prairie, rolling, rolling, rolling on into the glorious distance where the sky droops down and joins the earth at that intangible line called Horizon.

Like a shadow a blanketed figure glided by me, with noiseless, moccasin tread, carrying with it a rare perfume of burnt sweet grass, then disappeared like a phantom through the maze of wigwams. And over all a mild prairie breeze stirring. On into the night I lay there and watched, thrilled with an ominous transport of feelings. And all the while I was being watched!

When the village had quieted, there came from the distance a sound like faint, dismal moaning that would swell into a wail, then decrease but ever augmenting in volume. The sound came nearer and nearer me, seemingly hugging close the undulating ground, rising and falling with the swells and depressions of the prairie, until at last I knew it was the howl of a pack of coyotes. As out of the night this malign wail made advent, so into the night did it vanish, and quiet reigned, while the stars, growing larger, stole closer to the earth.

For several days I rode aimlessly over the prairie. Eventually a day came which offered an opportunity to attempt writing down some Indian melodies. It was a most difficult and discouraging experiment, and at the conclusion of this first trial my notebook was an enigma to me. A few disconnected bars of several tunes!

Lying in my lodge afterwards, I schemed and tried to find some means which would enable me to grasp this music, but after much experimenting I found the only way was to memorize as much as possible, jot it down when alone as best my memory would aid me, then be ever ready with my little book, upon hearing again the melodies, to fill in the gaps.

Becoming more familiar with their music, I realized why I had such difficulty in following the tones of their songs. Through the deep, guttural slurrings, they sang quarter tones! I did not allow my distress at this startling discovery to root itself deeply at the time, my interest and enthusiasm leading me to believe I could overcome this unusual step by substituting half tones and not lose the original effect.

The greatest difficulty was to search through the quavering pulsations of tones—impossible to expound—and reach the kernel of the theme. The appoggiaturas and glissandos, coated by a throaty tremolo, made the objective point one for perseverance and fatiguing patience to attain. Even then the satisfaction so found was never complete, for the truth eventually asserted itself that the fascination of their rugged, pagan music was the prodigious power of the reiterated use of the quarter tone.

I heard many hundreds of songs, dirges and ceremonial hymns; to write them as they are originally sung is an impossibility. The weird charm of their music is lost in the white man's interpretation through his inability to reproduce their subtle tone compass. Our scales are inadequate and there is no hope for the *exact* preserving of this aboriginal music after the red man has passed away.

The dirges sung by the Indians, during religious ceremonial rites, are of a monotonous and uninteresting style. I recall one experience of listening from eight o'clock in the morning until after five in the afternoon, to a sacred service performed over the "Beaver Bundle," where one dirge followed another until two hundred were sung. I listened and hoped for some new melodic theme—but to no avail. The closing action of this service was the blessing of the people by the medicine man, Bull Plume. This was done by smearing a solid circle of red paint upon the forehead, then streaking a line down the nose and ending with another circle upon the chin, accompanying by a low, wailing chant.

I was called by Bull Plume to kneel before him. Doing so, he painted me and blessed me with a prayer that I might live among his people in all safety, and when the time came for me to depart, might reach home, "whence came the rising sun," in good health and have "good luck."

In great contrast to the monotony of the dirge, is the melodic value the Indian has in his love songs, night songs, wolf songs and traveling songs. In constructing this music he is ruled by the interval of the fourth. No matter what style the tune, the objective point is the fourth. He takes many ways to reach it,

but after becoming familiarized with the style, one learns to anticipate this interval as a resolution to any given phrase. The closing note of all their music is upon the dominant, on which tone all authentic Indian music ends. Some southern tribes occasionally close their melodies with the tonic, but to my firm belief this closing is due to Spanish influence.

So primitive are the Blackfeet that music of even a two-part harmony is a most distressing cacophony to them. I have seen their puzzled facial expression upon hearing one of their most popular songs reproduced (by a phonograph) with harmonies, and they could not understand why "a few of the people sang so poorly"!

A most remarkable revelation it was to me when I heard many voices in unison singing in perfect accord, the appoggiaturas gracing quarter, half and whole tones with greatest ease.

And next to this wonder came the ability of Bull Plume (during the ceremony above referred to), to sing from eight A.M. until five P.M., with only one hour's intermission for lunch, without losing his voice completely, as his vocal output came deep from the throat with every suggestion of his vocal cords becoming frayed, ripped and torn to pieces.

* * *

As the days came and went, I became known to these people by the Indian name Kutianaantsi, the literal translation being Never-Tie-His-Moccasin-Strings. This name was not given me by reason of an implied neglect, but because I resembled a departed brave of this name. I was no longer a stranger to whom the stoic side of the red-man was shown. The apathy I encountered during my first few days was put aside and I found these people filled with humor and sensible to all kinds of emotions. They taunted each other good naturedly at their games; story telling was an important factor during the evenings when parties clustered around a wigwam fire, while the air was deliciously scented by dried bits of sweet grass thrown to the flames. I do not mean to say there were not moments of silence. There were, and out of these moments would emanate a faint, murmuring tone from some individual. Gradually this tone would increase and be taken up by others, until the volume was deemed sufficient to introduce a theme, which was the signal for the drums to come in with their syncopated beat. On, on the singing would grow, and presently a squaw would rise and dance, elevating herself on

the toes, then stamping the earth with her heels. She would soon be joined by another squaw, going through the same movement. The music, becoming more and more agitated and crescendoing with added accompaniment of the rattles, would incite a brave to his feet, his knees bent forward with a rigid tightening of the muscles, while his body, more flexible, would sway up and down to a savage cry that punctuated the steps of his dance. Other braves would arise, dancing in different attitudes but with legs ever in strained tension. Around and about the squaws they would hop and glide, the music now heaving in frantic weirdness. The guttural cries turned to whoops and my heart thumped, the blood leaping through my veins with excitement, when suddenly a war cry pierced the air, sounding the end of the dance.

It was glorious to awaken the next morning, just as the sun—the size of a cart-wheel—peeped up over the prairie; have breakfast of bacon, then mount a broncho and dash out into the vast, open stretch which seemed to call you like some enticing spectre. On through the waving grass and over the many-colored wild flowers, seeking strayed cattle or rounding up vagrant horses, inhaling the crisp, invigorating morning air,—a labor of delight. To live in the saddle the greater part of the day, roving over the land where buffaloes swarmed by the thousands in days gone by, their bleached skulls scattered around and about the wallows they so dearly loved, was a routine of the greatest interest.

Returning at twilight to the camp, I would saunter with several Indians to a knoll just on the outskirts of the village, where we would throw ourselves upon the ground, and I would look upon the scene of these nomadic people below me, my companions singing their love songs, night and wolf songs, until the stars began to glow and grow and come close to mother earth.

And so the days and nights went by, and I managed to jot down many melodious tunes; but never can these songs be heard as they sound out on the solemn prairie with only the accompaniment of the soft breeze, and the indefinable something that hangs heavy in that atmosphere, so potent, so full of color and yet so hopelessly intangible.

A morning came when I was awakened, before the sun rolled up on the horizon, by great confusion in the camp. I crawled to the opening of my wigwam and looked out. There, where the night before so many illuminated lodges stood, the “striking” of these shelters was going on. The time it took to “strike” the wigwams, pack them and be ready for the march seemed incredibly short. This work was done entirely by the squaws.

As I peered out, a squaw hurried by, saying something in Indian to me which I could not understand. I crawled back to my blankets, and hastily donned my clothes and I was none too quick, for another squaw was soon at work pulling up the pins of my lodge and it was but a moment before the outer sheeting was hurled off. As I stepped out, an Indian cantered by on his pony, calling out to me, "All go—Sun Dance!"

Then I understood the cause of the great commotion. The Sun Dance was to be held some distance towards the south, and although several days prior to this episode I had gleaned that the march would soon be made, my sudden awakening and the sight of the rapid demolishing of the Indian village allowed no other thought to enter my head.

Excitedly I worked, packing my few belongings, anticipating an entirely new scene of Indian life. Looking up, I saw a covered wagon start south, loose bronchos running by its side and five or six dogs trailing along after it. Wagon after wagon followed until there was quite a line formed.

Wishing to see the start to the best advantage, I mounted my pony and galloped to a knoll from where I could command a splendid view for some distance.

The Indians also use a contrivance called "travois" as a means of transportation, composed of two long saplings which they cross over the pommel of the saddle and there make fast. The heavier ends drag on either side of the broncho. Connecting these ends, behind the pony, are tied two or three cross bars, and upon these the family belongings are made fast, and very often a papoose can be seen bound in with the chattels. This line of wagons and "travois" creeping out over the prairie suggested some huge serpent of mythological enormity.

This caravan of the plains traveled on for some distance, when I saw it stop and soon disperse, breaking up into little groups which scattered in all directions. This dissemination would be for but a day, families selecting different routes to the appointed place for the Sun Dance.

I watched until the knolls of the prairie took from my view the last sign of the tribe, my broncho neighing and pawing and tugging at the reins, impatient at being left behind. Back, where but an hour ago an Indian village stood, but one vestige of life remained—an Indian dog which must have been absent at the time of the departure of his people. He was giving forth a piteous, low howl which grew into a loud, dismal bay as he lifted his head towards the heavens. I realized what a horribly lonesome

land the plains could be, and my impulse was to rush to the dog and quiet him. His voice was piercing a silence that seemed sacred to the spot and I knew not what it might awaken, for over me an ominous chill was running, as though stirred by some passing wraith. Cantering toward the beast, I called him, and he slouched along after me and my pony as we made for the south.

That evening my wigwam was pitched in the willows, close to Cut Bank River which was tinted by the crimson glow of the setting sun. A quarter of a mile farther down the river, the family of Chief White Calf was camped.

The sound of the rushing stream was far enough away to have more of a soothing than a disturbing effect. It so happened that I was to be alone for the night, and I took my broncho upon the prairie and hobbled him, then returned and chopped some wood for my night's fire. It was nine o'clock when I rolled up in my blankets and lay gazing out through the gap in the top of the lodge, at the great, glittering stars.

There is in Montana a species of bird called "the horned lark," which sings its beautiful little rills and trills through the night. On this night there came and perched such a lark on a willow close by. I was awakened from a semi-conscious slumber by the caroling of this merry little songster. The little voice that piped from out of the darkness, vibrated upon my emotions, for I was keen to all the novelties that daily added to my experiences.

My fire was waning, but sufficient flame and glow remained to cast a light which tinted the interior with a soft, roselike hue. With a long, inspired trill the bird departed, chirp following chirp, each one more indistinct as he flew away.

Reaching from my blankets and putting on the dying fire another piece of wood, I turned to sleep again, lulled by the distant song of the river. With my ear close to the ground, I heard a faint sound—more like a slight vibration, so delicate was the attraction. This disturbance became more and more pronounced and sleep was chased away, for soon I realized there was a prowler close by. There came a rustling in the willows which brought me to a sitting posture. Listening intently I could hear a tread coming nearer and nearer. Then there came to me the solution of the situation.

One of the dogs from Chief White Calf's camp, in his nocturnal pillaging, had found the scent of my bacon which I had placed outside in the cool air, and was intent on having it. As bacon is the "staff of life" on the prairies, I was keen to protect it. So I reached for a good-sized stick and crawling to the opening of my

lodge, with right hand ready to throw, my left lifted the flap of the opening—and there, not five feet from me, silhouetted by the light of my small fire, standing at right angles to me with his head turned and two piercing, penetrating little eyes looking right into mine, stood a grizzly bear, the size of a cow!

In this tableau each of us glared into the other's eyes; the bear puzzled and I terrorized. My first instinct was to remain as still as a statue, fearing one move on my part would mean but a short struggle when all would be at an end for me, as I had no weapon of any kind, my little axe lying on the ground just beyond the bear, where I had been chopping. The monster's eyes held to their searching stare, while mine were still set, as fixed when my frightful position was first realized. Seconds dragged into interminable lengths and minutes ran into all the years I had lived. Some little sprite seemed to run through every brain cell of my memory, awakening thoughts seldom aroused from their slumber for I felt hidden beneath the great fear, a certain joy of living, and my mind passed at lightning speed over many things.

I was fearful that the bear at any moment might be inclined to investigate me more thoroughly, when I would have to show I was a living thing by some move for protection, which was left for the inspiration of the moment. I could not tell what the result of such an action would be.

The beast dropped his head with a snarl and began swinging it to and fro, while I expected every sway towards me would impel him in that direction.

The tension I was under bars description; I waited for some definite move to be made by the animal. Shaking his head he seemed to prepare to come at me, then paused and again fixed his staring little eyes upon me.

While straining every nerve to remain quiet and still during these tantalizing moments, the first ray of hope came with the bear's taking a few steps toward an undergrowth of willows between my camp and the river. A few feet he went, then stopped, turned his head and gave me an arrogant look, which filled me anew with fearful dread of his returning. Again the characteristic swing of the head began and then crushing into the willows he went, and I listened to him crashing his way until all was silent but the rippling waters, which sounded more disturbed as the bear made towards them.

Quietly putting the flap of the lodge in its place, I crept to the outer side, crawled out from under the pegged canvas and was off through the darkness at a speed I have never before or since

been capable of making. I was thankful White Calf's camp was not so very far away!

* *

*

The Sun Dance is the greatest event of the year to the Indians. It is a ceremony that covers four days and during these days every hour brings forth some episode of the service that is of intense interest.

This religious feast is given by a squaw and is the outcome of a vow she has made to her god, the Sun. Should any one dear to her be in danger or distress, she prays to the Sun to protect and deliver him—vows that she will fast for forty days and nights, and then offer sacrifices to the Sun God (Natosi) as an evidence of her faith and her thankfulness.

At the appointed time she begins her fasting, with the expiration of which comes the second day of the "dance." Together with this chief offering comes the fulfilling of pledges made to the Sun by braves who have called upon their god when in desperate need, making a vow to torture themselves at the coming ceremony if saved, to prove their gratitude. These services were looked upon by the white authorities as being too barbarous, and the government put a stop to them, especially the one where an Indian would cut two parallel slits upon his breast, insert a strong piece of rawhide between the flesh and skin, tying the other end to a post, then slowly back away, chanting to the Sun God, until the skin would break and release him. The practice of this rite has been universally misunderstood, the white people considering it a mere show of bravery and savage intrepidity. The act was but the fulfilment of a sacred promise.

The Sun Dance begins with the building of an enormous lodge. This is practically a monument erected to the god of these Sun worshippers. It consists of eight upright posts about eight feet high, in octagonal formation, the top of each having a crotch. Within the center of the octangle another post is planted, rising four or five feet higher than the outer eight. Poles are then placed, one end upon the ground while the other rests in the separate crotches.

As the service progresses, hundreds of Indians completely surround this lodge, forming an entire circle about a quarter of a mile in diameter. At a given signal begins the most inspiring of all the Indian songs I ever heard.

The construction of this melody is of fourths, with now and then a third in approaching the completion of a phrase. The

subtlety of this invention is such as to make a perfect canonical figure, and this form it takes as section after section of the circle lifts its voice into the song, marching slowly towards the Sun Lodge.

The sparkling, glittering, glistening millions of many-colored beads decorating the buckskin costumes, thousands of painted feathers fluttering from the head dressings, and blankets of yellow, green and red, indiscriminately scattered among the throng, with the sun's rays playing upon the whole, gives the most marvelously beautiful kaleidoscopic effect as the army of singers closes in upon the Sun Lodge.

When this point is reached, a terrific chorus of war-whoops rends the air as hands grasp the leaning poles and shove them through the supporting crotches to the center post, where a rope loop is hanging to receive them. Upon these poles are placed blankets, head dresses and all kinds of offerings as sacrifices.

Out from her wigwam, so weak from fasting that she had to be supported, came the squaw who had prayed for help and had faithfully fulfilled her pledge to her god, and who was about to be released from the agonies of hunger.

She had her followers—four men and four women—wailing a mournful dirge. These attendants were gorgeously dressed, while she was most humbly appareled in a sombre-colored elk-skin robe. Slowly marching, this procession wended its way to the monument this squaw had had erected for the glorification of her Sun God, Natosi.

From now on, gaiety began and was soon in full blast. Dancing and singing and delicacies of food—to their taste—were revealed in during the remainder of the meeting. At this Sun Dance I met a chief by the name of Big Moon. We took a fancy to each other and became fast friends, this friendship still existing. He told me the second day after our meeting that I was to be his pale face son and gave me another name, Stem-e-a-ah-te-etichican, or Bull Shoe.

It was the last night of the Sun Dance, that seated in his wigwam, I heard the story of "Poia," the son of the Morning Star and the great prophet to the Blackfeet Indians.

During that night I learned much about their religion; of their belief in the Sun as the father, the Moon as the mother and the Morning Star as the only son. I was filled with the beauty of the Poia legend and made up my mind then that as soon as I could find it possible, that legend was to be put into libretto form for a serious grand opera.¹

¹Mr. Arthur Nevin's opera "Poia" was first performed at the Berlin Royal Opera House, April 23, 1910.—*Ed.*

When I was leaving the reservation for my return to the east, Big Moon gave me an Indian costume, and at parting took my hand and said, "I take your hand and wish you good luck. You come back to me and to my people again." And I did, the following summer.

During the greater part of the winter, the Blackfeet Indians are snowed up. The raging prairie winds fling the clustered snow flakes in blinding fury until an eddy catches and sweeps them into enormous drifts. The winter conditions continue into our late Spring, so it was June before I returned to the reservation.

During my second visit I became a nomad and seldom slept in the same camp two consecutive nights. This summer's experiences were as full of charm as the first. I took to this roving life most naturally and enjoyed the glorious freedom of a wanderer. I went more thoroughly into the legend of Poia, and found the poetic tale always more alluring as I learned from time to time the many episodes of the hero's life.

One day, seated in a lodge with an elderly Indian called White Grass, he told me the history of a song he had just sung. This song is very old and it survives because its creation came through a tragic circumstance.

A very beautiful Indian maiden loved a very handsome brave who returned this great love. They lived in the days when tribes fought tribes and the red man had many battles to fight.

One evening this lover strolled near his maiden's lodge and sang to her. In his song he told of his having been called by his chief to prepare for the war path, and that he was soon to depart; could she not hear the drums beating? The battle would be against a mighty foe. He sang to her of his great love and called upon Natosi to guard her while he was gone.

Days passed, and at evening of each passing day the maiden would go to a high knoll of the prairie and wait and watch for her lover's return.

One evening she heard, floating on a favoring wind, the song the Indians sang when nearing their camp after having been to war. She watched the long line of warriors, searching for the face she loved. The file passed and he was missing. She put her blanket about her, covering her head and face, and slowly returned to her lodge.

From that day she spoke not a word until the time for the Sun Dance approached. When the braves had completed the great Sun Lodge and were singing the ceremonial song, unseen through the excitement and confusion of the moment this beautiful maiden

climbed to the top of the high center post. In the song that she sang to her tribe, she told of her great love for him who had died for his folk; that she could not remain on earth without him; that he called to her all through the day and the night and she must go to him. And raising a long, shining blade of steel, she cried out in loud tones that through this blade she would pass to the happy hunting grounds where her lover waited to welcome her.

And all the little children of that time were taught the song and told the tale of the beautiful maiden who was not afraid.

* *

*

When the night came for my departure and I stood at the shed called a station, and saw the light of the locomotive winding along towards me, I took one last look over the vast expanse of rolling prairies, listened once more to the waving grass gently stirred by a delicious breeze, and saw once more the great, big stars in that land where nature remains the dominant note, those glorious stars that come fearlessly down so close to the earth!

Three steps and I entered the car and civilization.